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THE JUNIOR COLLEGE¹

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The junior-college movement is beginning to arouse widespread interest throughout the educational world, because it is believed that the adoption of the junior college as a part of our educational organization will have a very profound influence on the secondary schools. It may result in reducing the number of years devoted to elementary education. It will very vitally affect the future of the four-year colleges of liberal arts and sciences, and it may change almost completely the character of work done by many of our great state universities. Therefore, the junior-college movement with all its implications deserves the thoughtful and serious consideration of all who are deeply concerned for the educational future of the United States.

Every student of American education knows that in this country elementary and higher education began contemporaneously; that until well into the nineteenth century secondary education was unorganized and neglected; and that, for this reason, the elementary schools in the early days naturally tended to add a year or two to their curricula while the colleges dipped down a year or so into the realm of secondary education for the beginning of their curricula. In later years the high schools, with courses of study covering four years, took their place between the elementary schools, by that time crystallized into eight grades in most parts of the country, and the colleges which by common consent were assigned four years of work beyond the high schools. There was neither plan nor design in the whole affair. It was a matter of growth, and it has left us a system of education which is the despair of both foreign educators and American psychologists and the source of endless difficulties to the professional schools and colleges of the country.

¹ Address delivered before the Texas State Teachers' Association, November, 1921.

At the risk of dwelling on a well-worn topic may I mention the fact that the work done by students during the first two years of college bears a close resemblance to that done during the high-school period. Freshman rhetoric at college, though more thorough and exacting, is not unlike English composition in the high school. Trigonometry is as much of secondary character as plane geometry; elementary French or Spanish in college is of similar grade as elementary German in high school, or vice versa. And so one might go through nearly the entire list of subjects in our colleges of liberal arts during the first two years.

So long as the secondary schools of the country were regarded primarily as preparatory schools for college there was no particular occasion for apprehension. Students went quietly along a fixed groove into college where, with a minimum of lost motion, they continued their work in a similar fixed groove. On account of the close correlation between the curricula of the preparatory schools and the colleges, students speedily passed out of the secondary work of the early college years into courses in higher education.

Now, all of these things have changed. The secondary schools of today are much more than preparatory schools. Notwithstanding the enormous increase in college attendance, one-half of the high-school graduates never enter higher institutions, and the proportion is steadily increasing. As a result of this change in secondary schools, vocational courses have replaced some of the college preparatory courses. The secondary schools waged and won a war for independence against the domination of their curricula by higher institutions.

The emancipation of the high schools has caused the remarkable growth and extension which always accompany new-found liberty. Indeed, in the last half century the development of the high schools has been the most significant movement in American education. It means that the American people now seriously contemplate putting secondary education as well as elementary education within the reach of every boy and girl. When this plan has been consummated, democratic government and the proper development of economic resources in the United States will be more secure than they have ever been in the past.

But seldom are we favored with unmixed blessings. The freedom of the secondary schools has brought servitude on the higher institutions. The more vocational work the high schools include in their curricula, the less academic work students offer for entrance to college. The more complete the independence of the secondary schools, the less correlation there is between the curricula of the two types of institutions.

The colleges have reluctantly been attempting to adjust themselves to as many high-school programs as there are Freshmen who annually apply for admission. As a result, more elementary modern languages are being taught in college than ever before. Solid geometry has frequently been dignified by addition to the college curriculum, and even elementary Latin is by no means an unknown college subject. Our higher institutions are indeed spending a wholly unwarranted amount of time in assimilating Freshmen and Sophomores who are doing a grade of work which each year is becoming more clearly recognized as secondary rather than higher in character.

It must be apparent that this situation will some day become intolerable and that a solution should be sought. The junior college is offered as that solution. In order that we may better understand this proposal, it may be well to recall that the junior college is here understood to be two years of work superimposed on a four-year secondary-school course of study. It covers the six-year period in the life of young people from thirteen or fourteen to nineteen or twenty years of age.

What are the advantages of the junior-college plan? In the first place, it provides an opportunity for students to finish their secondary education without the unnatural break which now comes at the end of the four-year high school. All elementary work in languages, mathematics, English, history, etc., will be completed before a student takes up advanced work in liberal arts or the professional schools. Moreover, it is reasonable to suppose that the subjects will be completed in a superior fashion since there can be and should be complete correlation in the work of the entire six years. Personally, I have little doubt that where this change is made under proper conditions the progress which

students make in these six years will be considerably greater than that usually attained by the end of the Sophomore year in college.

The junior college is a solution for the preprofessional work now being required by the professional schools. For example, in medical schools two years of arts and science work are required for admission. Many of the dental schools have a one-year college requirement. The law schools are seriously contemplating a two-year requirement in arts and sciences. The engineering and agricultural colleges are attempting next to impossible four-year courses of study which include secondary subjects, vocational subjects, advanced cultural or citizenship subjects, as well as engineering and agriculture. Consequently, the engineers, at least, frequently discuss the lengthening of the engineering curriculum. Such preprofessional work is the natural work of a junior college, and after graduation therefrom students should pass easily into the professional schools and colleges.

Imagine what a boon it would be, for example, if at the time students were admitted to engineering colleges they had, like medical students, completed their English, foreign languages, elementary mathematics, and science. The engineering faculty and students alike would then be able to concentrate on engineering subjects in such a way as to insure better scholarship and greater economy in time.

The junior-college years would be years for testing the ability of college students. The combined high school and junior college would develop two types of curricula: (1) vocational and (2) preprofessional and preparatory to advanced and graduate work in liberal arts and sciences. In the first class would be included those students who expect to finish their formal education during or at the close of the six-year period; in the latter class, those who look forward to advanced or professional training after graduation from the junior college. For the first class of students there should be developed a much more adequate and extensive system of vocational education than now obtains in our secondary schools. For the second class of students there should be developed an intensive process of selection which would eliminate the incompetent from entrance into advanced or professional courses of study. The

annual Freshman and Sophomore mortality at college would be avoided; students would be guided according to their mental capacities, as demonstrated by examinations and mental tests, into vocational or college preparatory courses of study; and we should at last be free from that popular fallacy, so injurious to our system of higher education, that anyone who graduates from a secondary school is fitted to enter advanced or professional courses of study in college or university.

The six-year high-school and junior-college period corresponds fairly closely to the adolescent period in young people. The psychological change and the change in the character of their courses of study come at about the end of the Sophomore year in college rather than at the end of the four-year high school. During this period both young men and young women need closer supervision than in the later years. The junior college, whether public or private, usually affords such supervision. In the case of the public junior colleges young people remain at home for two additional years under the care and supervision of their families.

The dominant motive, however, behind the junior-college movement appears to me to be economy in education. By casting responsibility for a six-year program on our educational administrators we shall secure that high degree of correlation throughout the six-year course which, unfortunately, we so much lack at present. Moreover, there is an implication that with better organization of elementary education we can reduce the number of elementary grades by at least one. Kansas City, Missouri, has had seven grades for years; the training school of the University of Chicago is on the same plan; and several of the southern states have a similar system. Such a reduction in the total number of years devoted to elementary and secondary education, including the junior college, would be a great boon to professional students who, under our present educational organization, are from twenty-three to twenty-five years of age at the time they begin the practice of their professions.

Necessity, we are told, is the mother of invention. The junior-college idea was discussed years ago by President Harper and others connected with great universities, but it remained for privately

supported colleges with inadequate means to provide four years of collegiate work to take the step which, as I have already attempted to point out, is founded on sounder pedagogical principles than obtain in present educational practice. Nearly all of these small colleges conduct preparatory schools in connection with two years of college work. Notwithstanding inadequate income and resulting inferior faculty, together with a mediocre student body in many instances—a situation which has by no means afforded a fair trial of what this new type of institution can do—the privately supported junior colleges have already justified the hopes of their friends and supporters. Without doubt, the junior college offers a way for many struggling four-year colleges to change to two-year college programs of superior work.

The great future of the junior-college movement, however, seems to be with the publicly supported institutions. There is every indication that we shall witness in this field a demonstration similar to that which during the last half-century has given the public high school almost a monopoly of secondary education and has made the state institutions of higher learning the recognized leaders in three-fourths of the states in the Union. May I invite your attention, therefore, to a number of implications of the acceptance of the junior-college idea?

In the first place, a considerable number of the larger cities will add two years of junior-college work to their present high-school systems. The number of these junior colleges in any state will depend not only on the number of good-sized cities but on the number of such cities which do not now have recognized standard colleges whether privately or publicly supported. As long as the advantages of standard four-year colleges are within the easy reach of the residents of any city the establishment of a junior college will certainly be delayed temporarily, perhaps indefinitely.

It has long been known, however, that the patronage of higher institutions, even state universities, has largely been local in character and that in most instances only a small percentage of students come from a distance of more than fifty miles. It seems clear, therefore, as Professor Koos of the University of Minnesota has recently demonstrated in his investigation of the junior colleges,

that 50 per cent more graduates of high schools go to college if there are local facilities for higher education. Indeed, Professor Koos concludes that there are now two hundred cities of 10,000 population or over in this country, exclusive of those which already have higher institutions, where junior colleges would find a sufficient student patronage to justify their establishment.

Should this action take place, it becomes apparent at once what a tremendous increase we should have in the number of students availing themselves of the opportunity to secure higher education. Such an increase would raise immediately, in the minds of educators, administrators, and legislators who are now struggling with the task of raising sufficient money to meet the present crisis, the question of how the public can assume new financial obligations for the support of a large number of junior colleges. Moreover, it is certain that the establishment of public junior colleges will ultimately require some reorganization of the state's financial support of higher education. In New York City, Cincinnati, Toledo, and Akron, Ohio, where four-year standard universities are maintained at municipal expense, one hears constantly of dissatisfaction on the part of citizens who feel that if they maintain a municipal university they should be relieved in whole or in part from supporting the state universities and colleges. In Kansas City, Missouri, and Grand Rapids and Detroit, Michigan, where there are municipal junior colleges of considerable size, the same question seems as much in point. As the number of public junior colleges increases, covering in some instances the entire state, the question of the proper distribution of their expenses between the state and the local government will undoubtedly grow more and more acute.

In the solution of this problem there are several important factors. In the first place, the local community derives considerable benefit from the presence of any higher institution, including a junior college. It costs the residents much less to secure additional educational advantages than if they have to go away to college. Also, as has already been pointed out, it enables a much larger percentage of the population to continue their education and thus adds to the culture and possibilities of

wealth of the community. Notwithstanding these local advantages, it is entirely possible that the time may come in those states where public junior colleges are established when the state will be called on to support these institutions in whole or in part in return for a partial supervision of their work and the continuation of our policy of offering a free education to all citizens of the state. Such a step will help to establish the concentration of educational authority in the state, a concentration which, in the interest of elevating and promoting educational standards, is devoutly to be hoped for.

In the reorganization of the present system of higher education by the establishment of a large number of junior colleges, what will become of the present four-year endowed colleges of liberal arts and sciences? Will the superior pedagogical position of the six-year high school and junior college combined, together with the irresistible power of economic circumstances, force them to close their doors? Many people view such a contingency with the gravest apprehension and for that reason hesitate to lend their support to the junior-college movement.

Let us face the situation frankly. The movement for the standardization of colleges has already resulted in the reorganization of a hundred or more weak four-year colleges on a junior-college basis. As the standardization movement gains momentum through the establishment of public junior colleges, other colleges will undoubtedly be forced to abandon the futile attempt to do four years of collegiate work. How many of them will follow their predecessors into the fold of junior colleges it is impossible to say, but it seems reasonable to expect that fully two hundred will find it desirable to do so.

There yet remain a great number of colleges, perhaps three hundred, which are fully able financially to withstand the shock of the contemplated educational reorganization. They can offer to the youth of the country those advantages which are the undoubted virtue of our superior four-year colleges. Notwithstanding the compromises which most of them have been compelled to make with high-school administrators on college entrance and the consequent pedagogical difficulties encountered during the first

two years of the college curricula, the superior four-year colleges will continue, as in the past, to demonstrate their power and efficiency. This power lies in graduating annually a great number of young men and young women who have received thorough advanced training of such a nature as to inculcate in them the intelligence and the disposition to assist in the solution of our increasingly complex social and economic problems. To the graduates in liberal arts and sciences the nation owes an undoubted debt of gratitude, and no higher institution capable of performing this service need fear that the demand for this kind of an education will ever diminish.

Similarly, the question may be asked, What effect will the proposed reorganization of education have on the present state universities and colleges? No general answer can be given because the circumstances in the several states will naturally determine the course to be pursued. In more than one-half of the states in the Union there is no reason to feel that any change is likely to occur or is desirable for a number of years to come. Where the state institutions are comparatively small and particularly where there are in a state two or more state-supported higher institutions, each of no great size, it would be uneconomical and undesirable for the state to abandon the present compact organization of four-year colleges of liberal arts and sciences, engineering, and agriculture, for example, notwithstanding the presence of several public junior colleges of consequence within the state. Such a change in policy should be resorted to only when the number of prospective students in state-supported higher institutions justifies a reorganization of the present system of higher education.

There are, however, perhaps a dozen states in which the size of the present state university justifies the establishment of a state-wide system of junior colleges and the consequent cutting off at the university of the first two years of work in liberal arts and from one to two years of the present curricula in engineering and agriculture. The university would be stripped of all work which is really secondary in character, and it would stand forth as an institution devoted solely to advanced and graduate work in the liberal arts and sciences and in the several professions. It would at last

be free from that great impediment known as the Freshman and Sophomore classes. What wonderful progress it could then make in fulfilling its true function to the state is a thought which is beginning to kindle the imagination of those who see in the junior-college movement the solution of the difficulties faced by both the secondary schools and the higher institutions. May I, therefore, venture the prediction that the state which first faces the claims of the junior-college movement squarely and resorts to a reorganization to carry it out, will blaze the way in a movement which today is among the most significant in the realm of American higher education.

Let us remember, however, that the proposed reorganization cannot be effected except at great public expense. The total number of students availing themselves of the opportunity to secure education beyond our present high schools will leap upward. The quality of instruction which such students receive must under no circumstances be inferior to that now offered during the first two years in our state universities and colleges. The public must, therefore, be prepared to spend more for secondary and higher education than ever before.

I trust that no citizen contemplates this increase in expenditures for education with apprehension. Popular education has been the soundest and most profitable investment the citizens of this country have ever made. The greater the sums spent for public education—elementary, secondary, and higher—the sounder our democracy and the greater our wealth and economic resources. In the realm of political economy, specialists sometimes point out that it is possible to lower the standard of living by excessive investments rather than by current spending, and there are educators today who fear that we may have approached the limit of the state's capacity to invest in higher education. Such apprehension appears to me to be wholly unjustified. On the contrary, I believe we may go forward with unbounded confidence that we have made only a beginning and that the future generations in America through greater and greater investments in higher education will be richer in wealth, more charming in culture, and sounder in democratic citizenship.